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DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR YVETTE SAINT-ANDRE

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WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

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SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: November 2, 2007

Contentment among Austrians on the Rise

1. According to a study issued by the Imas Institute, Austrians are ever more satisfied with the general political situation. Contentment with the standard of living, the freedom of opinion and the health care situation are highest. Also, despite the constant quarrels in the coalition, the approval rates of Chancellor Gusenbauer are improving. The only issues that yielded negative results on the contentment scale are care for the sick and elderly and living together with foreigners. According to Imas boss Andreas Kirschhofer, the assessment of the economic situation has a great influence on the citizens' general attitude towards life and the evaluation of other problems. [Die Presse, p. 1]
Centrist daily "Die Presse" reports that generally, contentment is highest with workers and employees and among people residing in rural areas and small towns. Also, the Social Democratic voters are very satisfied, while OeVP supporters have a relatively low degree of satisfaction. Among FP0e and BZ0e voters, discontent is higher than in July, when the last study was compiled. The Greens had slightly reduced contentment rates.

Has Russia Issued an Ultimatum to Iran?

2. Speculations are rife that Russia is trying to persuade Iran to halt its uranium enrichment program for the time being. That was supposedly the background of an Iran trip of Russian Foreign Minister Lawrow last Tuesday. In the meantime, Nicolas Burns, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, has complained that Russia

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and China have been blocking further sanctions against Iran since March. On Thursday, Burns arrived in Vienna for talks with IAEA boss Mohammed ElBaradei. [Die Presse, p. 6]
According to APA online, the US is striving to achieve a closer cooperation between the Security Council of the United Nations and the IAEA in the conflict around the Iranian nuclear program. That is the content of the talks between Nicolas Burns and Mohammed ElBaradei. Burns argued for further sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran refuses to halt the uranium enrichment program, stating that "Iran chose to take the sanction route." Questioned about irritations between the US and ElBaradei, who recently criticized the US administration for its Iran policy and statements about the possibility of a Third World War, Burns stressed the fact that both the UN Security Council and the IAEA were important in resolving the conflict. With regard to the Turkish threat of an invasion into northern Iraq in order to proceed against Kurdish rebels operating from there, Burns referred to the upcoming visit of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Turkey. The US could

sympathize with the Turkish government and the Turkish population's attitude towards the "ill-natured attacks of the PKK," said Burns.

EU: Turkey Lax on Reforms

13. The latest progress report of the EU Commission on Turkey is largely negative. Especially with regard to human rights and protection of minorities, there are clear deficits - as there are with the civilian control of the politically powerful military. Meanwhile, experts warn of the possibility that a massive intervention of Turkish troops in northern Iraq could have a negative impact on the EU membership process. Another bone of contention is the still unresolved Cyprus issue. [Kleine Zeitung, p. 4, Wiener Zeitung, p. 1 and 7]
According to semi-official daily "Wiener Zeitung," on the positive side is the fact that the country overcame a constitutional crisis, and has continued its democratization course despite intervention on the part of the generals. Also, the new government has begun working on a comprehensive constitutional reform. The Commission's report states that it is now for Ankara to create the necessary pre-conditions for the opening of no less than 13 negotiation chapters. While this is relatively simple in some cases, the conflict with Cyprus, however blocks 8 central chapters of the altogether 35 negotiation chapters, writes the daily. Mass circulation provincial daily "Kleine Zeitung" concludes that, on the whole, the report constitutes a severe setback for the Turkish EU ambitions, and that a possible invasion in northern Iraq would close the Turkish EU membership chapter.

We Could Still Fight Another War

14. ...says Lieutenant General Jack Stultz, head of the US reserve army since May 2006, in an interview with centrist daily "Die Presse." According to his assessment, the capacity of the US reserve army is not yet exhausted and it could well fight another war. "I have 200,000 soldiers ready on call," he asserts. While he concedes that the situation in Iraq is difficult and the US has not yet found an answer to the question of how to gain the trust of the Iraqi citizens, he also shows himself convinced that the US is facing a long war in the country. With regard to the standard of his own troops, he maintains that the fact that the reserve army's equipment is partially outdated is no obstacle to its mission. "In the meantime, we have the best-trained soldiers, because we have learned a lot with every month in Iraq and have adapted our training." In his interview with "Die Presse," Jack Stultz emphasizes the fact that the reserve army does not only undertake the military training of the soldiers, but also educates them with regard to Muslim culture. "One does not simply give people a job to do and tell them: You'll learn this." The soldiers are aware that they may land themselves in Baghdad or Falluja when they commit themselves to service in the reserve army. "They understand that. The reservations are more on the part of the parents that fear for their son. That means that we also have to persuade the parents when we recruit." Questioned about whether the ranks of the reserve army have thinned out, Stultz denies this, saying that this impression was due to the rotation system. "When the active soldiers returned at the end of 2004, the reservists took over. Now, many have returned home and were replaced by active troops. This is a constant up and down. We are working to full capacity. Are we stretched beyond our capacity? No, we are not. We still have capacity."

"Snowflakes" from the Pentagon

15. Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's weakness for memos, also called "snowflakes" by Pentagon insiders, is now proving an embarrassment for the administration. More than one year after Rumsfeld's resignation as Secretary of Defense, the "Washington Post" has made public some of Rumsfeld's internal instructions. Some of them denounce Muslims as not being willing to engage in hard physical labor. Due to their oil wealth, they preferred to hire Pakistanis and Koreans instead while their own youth remained unemployed. Muslims "often have no concept of the kind of work, effort and the investments that bring prosperity to the rest of the world," Rumsfeld wrote. The White House immediately distanced itself from Rumsfeld's statements. [ORF online]

US Congress against Missile Defense Shield

¶6. For the time being, Congress has refused to give its consent to financing US President George W. Bush's controversial missile defense project. In the current fiscal year, no funds are appropriated to the program. However, that does not kill the project per se: As soon as the US has concluded agreements with Poland and the Czech Republic about the project, Bush can ask for additional funds - as he has repeatedly done in the past to get additional budgetary means for the US military engagement in Iraq. [Der Standard, p. 3, Die Presse, p. 6]
Kilner